

Response of the School of Social Work, York University, to the TRC Recommendations

June 2015

The School of Social Work at York University (which sits on the treated land of the Mississauga of the New Credit First Nation and the traditional lands of the Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Métis Nations) acknowledges the significant work that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has done in hearing and documenting the stories of Survivors of the Indian Residential School system. We honour the courage of the Survivors who bravely discussed their experiences with Justice Murray Sinclair, Dr. Marie Wilson and Chief Wilton Littlechild.

The summary of the final report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, which was released on Tuesday June 2nd, 2015, has 94 recommendations. The first recommendation was to address the legacy of the Indian Residential School as it relates to the Child Welfare systems throughout Canada. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommends that the profession of Social Work and the system of Social Work education ensures that all social workers “who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools”, as well as that all social workers “who conduct child-welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing.” The report also asks the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, to address the importance of developing a national research program that will assist in advancing the understandings of reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

It is the vision and responsibility of the School of Social Work, as we move forward in relationships, to keep these recommendations in mind. As a social justice-based and critical School of Social Work, we are committing to work in solidarity with these recommendations, while acknowledging that we are pervasively implicated in historical and contemporary violence against Aboriginal Peoples of this land – both as an educational institution modeled after those first developed in Western Europe and, more specifically, as a place where social workers are educated. We recognize that we have a long way to go in terms of decolonizing our own practices, and we articulate the following commitments as aspirations to struggle toward.

We, therefore, wish to state that we, as a School of Social Work, are committed to:

- educating our student body on the impacts of intergenerational trauma, continual colonial violence and current structural inequalities (for example

in the systems, services and policy-making bodies related to child welfare, the criminal justice system, education, mental health, and healthcare).

- supporting the healing of Survivors, their families and communities through holistic support through out the life stages.
- building relationships that further Aboriginal ways of addressing issues in a non-appropriative way.
- hiring and retaining Aboriginal tenure or tenure track scholars and educators who centre Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and teaching.
- admitting, supporting and mentoring Aboriginal students through all of our programs.
- supporting scholarship and research that contributes to advancing the understandings of reconciliation.